

or upcoming speculation on that. There are still many people at the mid-level management, regional directors, and the regional centers that need to be held accountable and get immediate results now and not way into the future after much more backlogs.

RESIGNATION OF ERIC SHINSEKI

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, for years, I have struggled with the VA bureaucracy in my region. There are attempts to downgrade the Roseburg Hospital. We are still fighting over adequate status and staffing. It took 6 years after I got funding for a critical new VA clinic in Eugene for them to break ground so we can get expanded services in staffing. Day in and day out my staff and I have to push the VA to get our veterans the benefits they have earned and the services they deserve.

Now we find that these problems were systemic and nationwide. It is right that General Shinseki has resigned, but that is just the beginning of the housecleaning and the reform we need in the Veterans Administration to see that they become an organization that is totally oriented toward serving our veterans and getting them the services they have earned and they deserve. Veterans shouldn't have to fight, they shouldn't have to wait in line. We can do better, and we must.

TRIBUTE TO ADMIRAL ROBERT PAPP, JR., AND COMMANDANT PAUL F. ZUKUNFT

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to congratulate the service of retiring Admiral Robert Papp, Jr., the Commandant of the Coast Guard, and to acknowledge the coming on board, if you will, of Commandant Paul F. Zukunft; to thank them for their collective service and to acknowledge Admiral Robert Papp, Jr., for his commitment to a rising and excelling United States Coast Guard.

In every hearing that the Coast Guard appears before us, as a member of the Homeland Security Committee and a ranking member on Border Security and Maritime Security, I acknowledge that sight of Coast Guard helicopters rescuing thousands during Hurricane Katrina, plucking them out of the raging waters and saving lives. Many people don't remember 1,000 died.

Today, that ceremony is occurring. I pay tribute to them, and I hope that many of us will have the opportunity to congratulate both of them.

Thank you for your service to this Nation. You are remembered.

STOP TRYING TO TAKE CARE OF THE WHOLE WORLD AND PUT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FIRST

(Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, you can never satisfy the government's appetite for money or land. They always want more. But this Nation's national debt has now reached an astounding \$17.6 trillion. The only reason more people are not upset about that figure is that nobody can humanly comprehend a figure like \$17.6 trillion.

Basically, what it means is that this Nation is in the shape of Detroit. The only difference is Detroit can't print money. This Nation keeps printing more money, more money, and more money. That is going to speed up in the years ahead if we don't get much more fiscal conservatism at the Federal level.

Anyone who wants to draw Social Security, our Federal pension, or our military pension that will buy very much in future years should demand much more fiscal responsibility from our Federal Government.

What we mainly need to do, Mr. Speaker, we need to stop trying to take care of the whole world and start taking care of our own country and putting the American people first once again.

HONORING TYLER FAZZARI

(Mr. ISRAEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Tyler Fazzari. Tyler is 10 years old. He lives in Port Washington, and he is giving back to our community in a major way.

Last week, I visited Nassau Suffolk Services for Autism, and I literally ran into Tyler in a corridor. I learned that he gave that school \$800 donated by his friends for his own birthday. He has a friend with autism, and he wanted to do something about it.

Tyler told me that he formed an organization called BirthdayBack. It inspires other kids to raise money for their birthdays in lieu of gifts and give to charity.

Tyler is an entrepreneur, but he is also a philanthropist. And at age 10, he gives me great hope for the future of our country and great hope that if enough of us are inspired by Tyler we will find a cure for autism.

Thank you, Tyler.

RESIGNATION OF VA SECRETARY SHINSEKI

(Ms. BROWN of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Secretary Shinseki for his service.

When you are born you get a birth certificate and when you die you are going to get a death certificate, and that dash in between is what you have done to make this a better place.

I have served on the Veterans Affairs' Committee for 22 years, and I know that my colleagues in the House and in the Senate talk a good talk. We talk about what we want to do for veterans. But talking and walking and rolling, I know for a fact that not until we had a Democratic House, a Democratic Senate, and a Democratic President, we got the largest funding in the history of the United States for the veterans.

This Secretary opened up the system so that all the Vietnam veterans could come in without proving one by one. So it is a lot of work that we have got to do—not what we have got to do, not just the VA, but what we have to do to make sure that we have the kind of service the veterans deserve.

CORRINE BROWN GRATEFUL FOR THE SERVICE OF VA SECRETARY SHINSEKI HE IS A TRUE AMERICAN HERO

WASHINGTON, DC.—Congresswoman Corrine Brown released the following statement today:

As a senior member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am disappointed in the resignation of VA Secretary Shinseki. While he felt he would have been a distraction going forward to resolve the issues brought to light by Phoenix, I feel Secretary Shinseki was the person most capable of fixing these issues. I am grateful for his service both as a soldier and a veteran.

Since being sworn in as the seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs in 2009, Secretary Shinseki has brought reform and a new way of thinking to the VA. As a former Chief of Staff of the Army, Secretary Shinseki knew what the young men and women protecting our freedoms overseas were going through and wanted to make sure they did not have to fight a bureaucracy to get the services they earned.

The young men and women coming back and the veterans from previous wars shared more than battlefield wounds when they returned home, they shared a difficulty in getting care and benefits for their signature wounds. For the Vietnam veterans, it was exposure to Agent Orange; for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, it was Traumatic Brain Injury.

Secretary Shinseki made the decision in 2009 to establish service connection for Vietnam Veterans with three specific illnesses that, based on the latest scientific evidence, have been associated with exposure to the herbicides referred to as Agent Orange—Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease, and B-cell leukemias.

This was the right thing to do for Vietnam Veterans and, thanks to this decision, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have one of the "presumptive" illnesses do not have to face another hurdle and prove an association between their illness and their military service. Thanks to this quick and decisive action VA has granted more than 160,000 retroactive claims associated with these three presumptive conditions, and awarded more than \$4.5 billion in retroactive benefits, with an average retroactive benefit payment of nearly \$27,000. Under Secretary Shinseki, the VA continues to expand and improve its mental health programs, adding more than 3800 mental health professionals to its clinical staff. As part of VA's 2012 hiring initiative, VA has hired 1,600

mental health clinicians for newly created positions and 800 Peer Specialists and Peer Apprentices.

Since 2009, Congress has increased the mental health care budget by 42 percent and VA has treated 1.4 million Veterans with specialty mental health services in fiscal year 2013 (FY13) alone. Under Secretary Shinseki's leadership, the VA has expanded access to mental health services with longer clinic hours, telehealth capability to deliver services, and standards that mandate rapid access to mental health services.

In July 2010, VA published a historic change to its rules, streamlining the process and paperwork needed by combat Veterans to pursue a claim for disability pay for PTSD.

After Secretary Shinseki made it easier for those claiming Agent Orange and PTSD injuries, the claims backlog had major increases. With his work to have overtime and sharing of records, the claims backlog has been reduced by more than 50% in the past 14 months. The VA has shown an unwavering commitment to improving the delivery of benefits to Veterans. With input from all of it veteran partners, the VA created and is implementing a comprehensive plan to end the Veterans disability benefits claims backlog.

When Secretary Shinseki took office, he set a goal of ending Veterans homelessness by 2015. The VA, along with local, state, and federal partners has decreased the number of homeless Veterans on a given night by 24 percent since 2010 and are continuing to work to keep bringing this number down.

The VA provides quality and timely healthcare and benefits to our veterans. We have a duty to make sure that all those who have defended this country when called upon receive the care they have earned through their service. The VA is better for Secretary Shinseki's service to our veterans.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the people of Ukraine on conducting free and fair elections that the world watched closely. As a beloved friend of mine from Ukraine wrote me:

These elections were amazing. People were standing in long lines with the purpose to vote. And we did it. We do hope that we will start to live in a new way. Ukrainians deserve much better in life and in leaders. Thank you.

With a nearly 60 percent turnout, and despite the fearful invasion by Russia of Ukraine's eastern provinces, the election proceeded on schedule and without major disruption. This is a living testament to the future and the hopes the Ukrainian people invested in their new government.

The people of our region send heartfelt congratulations to the incoming Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. A successful businessman in his own Nation, he now holds a historic opportunity to lead Ukraine to write a new era of stability, prosperity, and democratic reform. It will be a major undertaking. May the hopes of the Ukrainian people for a better life be realized in our time.

Ukraine can rise to be one of the greatest nations on the European continent. Her time is now.

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VETERANS TIMELY ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE ACT

(Mr. DENHAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss a new bill that has just been introduced, the Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act. Our veterans have waited too long.

If you have served our country and if you have gone to the VA center, we need to make sure you have got access to timely care. Whether it is primary care or urgent care, if it is beyond 7 days, you can go see a new doctor, and if it is beyond 14 days for specialty care, you can go see a new doctor at the VA's expense.

We owe our veterans nothing less than to make sure that they have got world-class health care and that they have it immediately.

MAYA ANGELOU

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this afternoon to say a few words in tribute to the great Maya Angelou, who just this week died at 86 years of age. Mine will be one of, truly, millions of tributes that have begun.

President Obama said of Maya that she helped generations of Americans "find their rainbows amidst the clouds and that she inspired the rest of us to be our best selves." I think many would agree with that.

Attorney General Holder named one of his daughters "Maya" after Maya Angelou. We have a charter school here in the District of Columbia named for her. She visited that school. That is the kind of woman she was.

It is almost impossible to describe this life, all 86 years of it. She drew from it all that you can draw from one life.

Yes, we know her, perhaps, best as a poet and as a writer and as, some would say, an autobiographer because most of her writing comes from her own life in successive memoirs, in successive autobiographies, but much of her fame came when she was middle age and beyond.

Until that time, she embarked on a far-flung career wherever it would take her, dancer—yes, dancer—singer, composer, actress. She was Hollywood's first Black female director, but she was most devoted to the printed word as an essayist, as a playwright, as a poet; and that came out of her own love of books, of words.

Maya Angelou was active until the end of those 86 years. When she died, she was the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

I will have some words later in these remarks to say about that, since I visited her there, and it was a most memorable time for me.

Carol Neubauer of Southern Women Writers writes, I think, intelligently, of Maya, saying:

Angelou has been recognized not only as a spokesperson for Blacks and women, but also for all people who are committed to raising the moral standards of living in the United States.

That is just how broad was Maya's mission. I am very grateful that she was recognized as I believe she should have been.

Well before she died, President Clinton gave Maya Angelou the National Medal of Arts, and then, President Obama gave her the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Some of us in the House are trying to give her, posthumously, the Congressional Gold Medal.

It seems as if there are not enough honors that one can come forward with for a woman with so many talents and with so great a love for humanity, who kept pouring it out, so that we could partake as well, but I think we learn most from her life by understanding how hard was her early life and how she rose.

It is interesting that, at President Clinton's inauguration, those lines "And Still I Rise," which are from the poem she wrote for his inauguration, are best remembered—perhaps most remembered—than President Clinton's words themselves at his own inauguration.

Yes, she rose. She rose from the bottom of society. She worked in places many of us couldn't conceive of. She was a shake dancer in nightclubs. She was a fry cook. She worked in hamburger joints. She worked as a dinner cook in a creole restaurant.

Let me say, as someone who tasted Maya Angelou's cooking, she was a master cook. She once worked in a mechanic's shop, taking the paint off of cars with her hands, not with an instrument.

She was married, and she had a son. Through all of the traditional phases of a woman's life, she managed to do many things.

In San Francisco, she sang at the Purple Onion Cabaret. She toured with "Porgy and Bess." In the 1950s, Maya Angelou was in the Harlem Writers Guild. That is where she first met Jimmy Baldwin, the great African American writer.

That friendship was very important for the inspiration it gave her to write her own first autobiography. Don't think there could have been a civil rights struggle without Maya Angelou.

Indeed, she worked directly with Dr. King, and she was the northern coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.